

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 09812 040153Z

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UNCLAS NEW DELHI 9812

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SUBJECT: TARAPUR: PRESS ON DELAY IN U.S. URANIUM SHIPMENTS

REF: BOMBAY 1641 (NOTAL), NEW DELHI 9516

1. AN EDITORIAL IN THE STATESMAN ("UNCERTAINTY AT TARAPUR") AND A WASHINGTON-DATeline NEWS STORY IN THE INDIAN EXPRESS ("U.S. MAY SHIP URANIUM FOR SIX MONTHS") TODAY ACKNOWLEDGED EFFORTS BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT TO OBTAIN RELEASE OF U.S. NUCLEAR FUEL SUPPLIES FOR SHIPMENT TO INDIA, AND THE EXPRESS JUDGED IT "LIKELY THAT THE U.S. WILL SHIP TO INDIA SIX MONTH'S SUPPLY OF ENRICHED URANIUM FOR THE TARAPUR REACTOR WHILE THE NRC HOLDS HEARINGS LATER IN JULY ON ALL

ASPECTS OF AMERICA'S WORLD-WIDE NUCLEAR EXPORTS."

2. THE EXPRESS'S CORRESPONDENT, T.V. PARASURAM, REPORTED THAT AMBASSADOR SAXBE "HAS BEEN IN WASHINGTON FOR MORE THAN A WEEK DISCUSSING WITH KEY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND COMMISSION MEMBERS THE NEED FOR EARLY SHIPMENTS TO FULFILL THE AMERICAN COMMITMENT. IT IS LEARNED THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAS PLAYED A MAJOR PART IN ALLAYING MISUNDER-
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PAGE 02 NEW DE 09812 040153Z

STANDINGS."

3. THE STATESMAN EDITORIAL SAID THAT J.C. SHAH, CHAIRMAN OF INDIA'S ATOMIC POWER AUTHORITY, "HAS DISCLOSED THAT THE UNCERTAIN FUEL SUPPLY POSITION FOR THE TARAPUR PLANT CONTINUES TO BE A CAUSE FOR CONCERN. APPARENTLY THE U.S. NRC'S INFORMAL DECISION ON MAY 21 TO CLEAR ONE SHIPMENT OF ENRICHED URANIUM ... HAS NOT REMOVED UNCERTAINTY. DR. SHAH HAS SAID THAT IF A MINIMUM OF NINE TONNES OF ENRICHED URANIUM IS NOT RECEIVED BY THE END OF AUGUST, POWER GENERATION AT TARAPUR MAY HAVE TO BE REDUCED TO CONSERVE FUEL STOCKS."

4. THE EDITORIAL SAID "THE NRC IS NOT UNAWARE OF THE LIKELY CONSEQUENCES" IF THE SHIPMENTS ARE NOT RELEASED, BUT "IT IS TAKING AN UNCONSCIONABLY LONG TIME TO MAKE UP ITS MIND. THIS MAY BE, AT LEAST PARTLY, DUE TO CONTINUING SECTIONAL OPPOSITION TO THE INDIAN ATOMIC ENERGY PROGRAMME."

5. THE STATESMAN CONCLUDED: "THE NOTION THAT AMERICAN NUCLEAR SUPPLIES MAY HAVE HELPED INDIA TO CONDUCT THE UNDERGROUND EXPLOSION IN THE RAJASTHAN DESERT DOES NOT SEEM TO HAVE BEEN FULLY DISPELLED. IT IS, HOWEVER, REASSURING TO NOTE THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAD DONE ABOUT ALL THAT IT COULD TO REMOVE SUCH MISCONCEPTIONS. IT HAS AGAIN AFFIRMED THAT IT HAS NO REASON TO DOUBT, ON THE BASIS OF AVAILABLE FACTS, THE INDIAN STATEMENT THAT NO U.S. SUPPLIED MATERIAL WAS USED IN DETONATING A NUCLEAR DEVICE IN 1974."SCHNEIDER

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